



GEMA



FEMA

Disaster News

April 17, 2007
DR-1686-07-039

Joint Information Center Media Contact:
FEMA/State News Desk: 229-401-2770

BE PREPARED: TORNADO SEASON CONTINUES

CORDELE, Ga. – As tornado season continues through May, Georgians should remember that a killer storm could strike any time, in-season or out, warn officials of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The season came in strongly in early March, when tornadoes killed nine state residents, left more than 80 injured and caused \$118 million in property damage. Then a new wave of severe weather in mid-April brought another reminder.

“Springtime, especially in the Southeast, is the time when warm air from the Gulf is moving north and can set up turbulence that grows deadly,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Michael Bolch, in charge of federal disaster recovery efforts after the March storms for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Nearly 1,800 Georgia households have received federal disaster assistance for the March outbreak.

The tornado season generally continues through May, but the storms can come any time, and anywhere. Six of the recent Georgia deaths were in sparsely populated Baker County, which has only one incorporated town, but the same squall line dropped a funnel sixty miles away in downtown Americus, destroying a 143-bed hospital. Some calculations say that the fifth deadliest tornado in American history occurred in Georgia, when a rare double twister roared through Gainesville in 1936, killing more than 200, many in crowded mills. That storm occurred in April. The state’s second most fatal tornado cluster, in 1998, came in March.

If a tornado strikes, the safest place is in a strong building with no wide spaces under unsupported roofing (last month’s deaths in a high school gym in Alabama remain a tragic reminder). The most secure shelter is in a basement or small interior room. An interior closet or hallway with heavily reinforced walls also might serve as a secure shelter. Seeking refuge under heavy furniture like a desk is advised. Always stay away from windows. Put as many walls as possible between you and the storm outside.

Mobile homes do not provide adequate protection from a tornado. Experts also say not to try and outrun one of these storms in a car.

If a tornado finds you in an area with no secure buildings nearby, seek a ditch or depressed area in the ground. Lie flat. Place your hands over your head for protection.

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Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms, but their approach may be invisible if they come in the night. Day or night, their unpredictable leaping and hop-scotching from one area to the next makes them stealthy killers, despite their deafening roar.

Planning and practicing specifically how and where to take shelter from a tornado is a matter of survival. Be prepared to act quickly.

Tornado Survival Skills

- Familiarize yourself with the terms that are used to identify a tornado hazard.
 - A **tornado watch** means a tornado is possible in your area. You should monitor NOAA Weather Radio (www.weather.gov/nwr), local radio and television news outlets for the latest developments.
 - A **tornado warning** comes when a tornado is actually occurring. Take shelter immediately.
- Determine in advance where you will take shelter in case of a tornado warning.
 - Storm cellars or basements provide the best protection.
 - If underground shelter is not available, go into an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible.
 - In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible.
 - Stay away from windows, doors and outside walls. Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they attract debris.
 - A vehicle, trailer or mobile home does not provide good protection. Plan to go quickly to a building with a strong foundation, if possible.
 - If shelter is not available, lie flat in a ditch or other low-lying area. Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
 - Plan to stay in the shelter location until the danger has passed.
- Get a kit of emergency supplies. Store it in your shelter location.
- For weather-related information visit www.noaawatch.gov.

Stay Informed

- After a tornado, stay out of damaged buildings. Avoid downed power lines.
- Help injured or trapped people. Check on others who may require special assistance, such as the elderly, children and people with disabilities.
- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should listen to [NOAA Weather Radio](#), watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available.

For tips on disaster planning visit the Georgia Emergency Management Agency website www.gema.state.ga.us, or the Department of Homeland Security's www.ready.gov.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.